

# A Kentucky Derby Fantasy?

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As some of you may remember, it was in early March of last year when I watched a video on YouTube of [Big Brown destroying](#) an allowance field at Gulfstream and posted it on this blog. It was hard to watch that race and not feel like Big Brown was something special.

Thanks to a couple bloggers giving me a heads up, I have that same feeling again with a horse named Mr. Fantasy.

After downloading his PPs and seeing that Mr. Fantasy won his first two races by a combined 19 lengths at Aqueduct, I was intrigued. So I did a little more digging and found his two races on YouTube. The [first one](#) was his 10 1/2-length maiden win on Dec. 28 where he exploded like a shotgun and cruised home in 1:10.51 under Alan Garcia's hand ride.

The [next one](#) was his 1 1/16-mile allowance race at Aqueduct on Feb. 1. This was is even more visually impressive, as he broke from post 10 and went wire-to-wire for an 8 1/2-length score while being ridden out by Richard Migliore. He earned a 97 Beyer for that effort. The cool part about this second video is that Mr. Fantasy's majority owner - Terry Finley from West Point Thoroughbreds - does an informative interview where he answers many questions about the colt.

I'm not afraid to say right now that Mr. Fantasy - despite having not faced stakes company as of yet - is one of the best-looking 3-year-olds I have seen so far this year. His stride is picture-perfect, he is a cool customer and his pedigree (E Dubai-Twice Forbidden, by Spectacular Bid) screams 1 1/4 miles. He still has a lot to prove, but it sure is exciting when you see a horse do those things to begin his career.

If the name Twice Forbidden looks familiar that's because she is also the dam of Tin Cup Chalice who won the Big Apple Triple last year and has won 8 of 10 starts. Like Tin Cup Chalice, Mr. Fantasy was bred in New York. He is trained by Kiaran McLaughlin.

While the YouTube video answers many of the questions I had about Mr. Fantasy, I decided to call Terry Finley myself to help fill in more of the blanks. Below is some of our conversation.

If you haven't heard of Mr. Fantasy yet, you will very shortly. His next race is the \$250,000 Gotham on March 7 and if all goes well the Wood Memorial is after that. My guess (and my \$100 future bet at 75-1) is that we'll be hearing his name at Churchill Downs on May 2 as well.

JS: Terry, take me back to the beginning. How did you find Mr. Fantasy?

TF: We saw him at the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga yearling sale and Buzz (Chace, bloodstock agent) really loved him. It's funny because we had just won the (Darley) Test with Dream Rush and with that we got a free season to E Dubai. So I guess we had E Dubai on our minds when we went into the sale. He's a sire that offers a lot of value and I think you'll be hearing a lot more of him soon.

(Mr. Fantasy) was a lot more pedigree than you usually get from a New York bred. Of course, his half-brother (Tin Cup Chalice) hadn't run yet, so Twice Forbidden wasn't really well known then. He was fairly well-prepped but wasn't real big or tall. But Buzz thought he had a great mind and was the total package. We wound up paying \$135,000 for him.

JS: Where did he go next?

TF: We sent him down to Nick (de Meric) in Ocala to be broken. Nick wasn't really ga-ga over him early on, but we bought him as part of a pinhooking deal (at F-T Midlantic 2-year-old sale). I had two partners (Nick Cammarano and Donald Brooks) who were looking for a New York-bred but he was a little more than they originally wanted to pay (\$230,000). I told them I thought he was a good prospect and worth the money.

He had bad shins coming out of the sale so he went to Goodwin Farm near Saratoga after the sale for three weeks of rest before we sent him to Kiaran (McLaughlin). He is a late foal (May 24), so Kiaran said we should

give him some time. Kiaran wasn't crazy over him yet either. He said he'd probably need a race.

JS: Obviously, he didn't need a race. He broke his maiden at first asking by more than 10 lengths. I guess that was more than you expected?

TF: Oh yeah. I've seen a ton of maiden races but haven't seen many move the way he did. He's got a nice, long neck and everything just seems to fit with him. We were definitely pleasantly surprised.

JS: And where did you watch his allowance race?

TF: I was on my way to the Super Bowl with my son, but we had a lot of time so we decided to stop at Tampa Bay Downs to watch the race. It's funny because he was supposed to race the week before in an 'a other than' but the race didn't go. Then he was supposed to go short on the Wednesday before but that didn't go because of bad weather. So we put him in for Sunday even though we really didn't want to go two turns with him just yet. But we decided to anyway and it wound up being the perfect scenario because he got to go two turns but didn't have to run his guts out doing it.

What impressed me the most is that he came back to the winner's circle like he had been there before. You can see that in the video. He's really a cool customer. And he ran so fast on the sheets we use, which was impressive. Both jockeys (Alan Garcia and Rich Migliore) told Kiaran that he is very special. That's coming straight from them.

JS: He won those first two so easily and on the front end. Naturally, the next logical question is whether he can rate.

TF: We think he can. In the last race he went to the lead but he throttled down nicely and relaxed. He's not a runaway freight train. Both riders said he'll do what is asked of him. We'd like to see him sit behind horses in his next one but we won't strangle him into submission to do it.

JS: What is the breakdown of the ownership of Mr. Fantasy?

TF: The two main partners (Cammarrano and Brooks) own a total of 40% and we syndicated the other 60%. There are about a dozen people in the syndicate.

JS: In watching your video I appreciated the fact that you guys are already talking Derby. Some people get very superstitious about it and refuse to talk about it when you bring up the subject.

TF: I'm not really superstitious although I can see why some people are. Maybe that's the new school way of thinking. But when you're part of a syndicate and you have CEOs who want to know what's going on, you have to make plans. They want to know if this is a potential Derby horse so I am honest with them.

Also, what we've said is, if he gets hurt 45 days from now then our partners have lost the opportunity to get pumped up and have fun for 45 days. The Derby is a longshot no matter what happens, so I want everyone to have fun with this. This is a great time of year and we want to people to enjoy it.

JS: I assume the name Mr. Fantasy comes from the Traffic album?

TF: Yeah. Originally we were going to go with Sultan of Dubai, but one of the partners liked Mr. Fantasy better